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ABSTRACT

The following 13 papers on business and marketing education are included in this document: "Internet Marketing" (Herb Brown, Jerry Kandies); "Disk This . . . Paper Flow on the Go!" (Mary Evans, Wilbur Whitley); "Production and Evaluation of On-Line Tutorials" (Margie Gallagher, Evelyn Farrior, Jane Geissler); "Basic Skills Needed for Entry-Level Internet Jobs" (Krystie Grubb); "Integrating Technology to Support Constructivist Learning" (Lisa Gueldenzoph); "Creating a Client-Server Application with FrontPage 2000 and Access 2000" (Margaret Baumann, Ellis Hayes); "Going the Distance" (Elizabeth Hodge); "Incorporating Service Learning in the Business Classroom" (Thelma King); "Distance Learning in the New Millennium: A Perspective from Both Sides of the Desktop" (Cynthia Miller); "Website Design Considerations" (Bonnie Skelton); "Introduction to Microsoft Access 2000" (Bonnie Skelton); "Developing Leadership Skills for Teaching" (Randall Wells, Clarence White); and "What North Carolina Teachers Already Know about E-Commerce" (Scott Williams). (KC)

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An Odyssey into the New Millennium: Rediscover 21st Century Business & Marketing Education

18th Annual Atlantic Coast Business & Marketing Education Conference Proceedings

North Raleigh Hilton
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Sheila Tucker, Editor

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Internet Marketing

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The challenge for Internet marketing and sales is designing a web site that portrays products as well made and reliable, instills trust in the integrity of the company, and plants seeds for a lasting customer relationship. More than with other media, such as print or radio and television broadcast, the Internet marketer must make a good first impression. Research shows that people form lasting impressions from even brief encounters of 10 seconds or less. That these initial impressions turn out to be accurate "even when they are based on brief observations of expressive behavior" (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992) is quite remarkable. Additionally, current research data points to e-commerce trends and e-consumer profiles that are proving early marketing predictions to be inaccurate. While some of the literature reports that multi-channel marketing has begun to repel the threat of pure play internet marketing (CyberAtlas, 2000), other research presents profiles of web shoppers who are not looking for basics or bargains but for unique, even expensive, items that cannot be found elsewhere (Lee, 2000).

Using the WWW for marketing raises many fundamental questions for Web page designers. Important concerns are visual impact, navigational logic and intuitiveness, and informational credibility. Three elements that affect how an e-visitor perceives and valuates a web site are content, home page design, and overall site design (Spiliopoulou, 2000). The exponential growth and popularity of e-commerce raises many issues for investigation about the relationships among e-consumer attributes, product marketing, and web site design. One important concern is the effect that design has on the e-consumer's decision to purchase either now or later. In this paper, we show that quick judgments based on first impressions of a business web site may be a determining factor in whether a consumer has a satisfying experience and eventually makes a purchase.

To examine individual's first impressions of web sites a research study was conducted. For the study, 15 business web sites were chosen randomly from a list of over 100 online shopping mall sites listed at Yahoo.com. Copies of business web sites were saved and stored on a local area network drive so unpredictable load time would not be a factor as it might be if the web page were traveling over the Internet where distance and network traffic can make response time painfully slow. All web sites were timed using the refresh metatag to appear for only 10 seconds. After the 10 seconds, the participants were asked to respond to four questions regarding the site they viewed. A sample of 151 college students was used for this study.

The results of the study provide an interesting insight into the first impressions of web sites and purchasing decisions. As expected, high ratings of a site's appearance predicted a more positive attitude toward the product being promoted and a strong likeliness to make a purchase.

Overall, respondents found sites classified as "artistic" more appealing than "standard" or "amateur" web sites. Respondents were more likely to purchase a product from an e-tailer with a visually appealing site, suggesting perhaps that the appearance of a web site (artistic and standard) has a profound impact on the successful online sales of a company. This finding erases the myth that you can haphazardly create a web site and produce extensive web sales just because the product is in demand or because it is offered at a competitive price. Additionally, multi-channel sites were more likely to generate a purchase than pure plays, suggesting that name recognition, and the "brick and mortar" behind a company does make a

difference in online purchasing. The multi-channel sites all look as if a large budget was available to finance site design suggesting that the days when a business could hire an amateur to create a web page are long gone.

E-commerce requires new sets of business strategies from creating an appealing web site to integrating traditional backend systems such as inventory management and shipping into the web environment. Done right, the new technology is costly. The challenge posed to marketing practices on the web, as the e-marketing industry begins to mature from its present stage of infancy, is how to combine proven theory and practice with web design and implementation issues. As shown here, web page creation is more than just sitting at a computer and making a web page. Its layout and design may well determine whether sales are generated or not. Pure play E-tailers should also be aware of the multi-channel players in their markets and need to develop business strategies to compete and differentiate themselves from the better-known companies. Comparison shopping for price and for uniqueness is just a matter of minutes – a few mouse clicks away. After all, the net mall is worldwide.

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Disk This---Paper Flow On The Go!

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On the Go! That is today's teacher. New state curriculum, new students, new committees, conferences and meetings, new duties, like club adviser---yes, a new school year and/or semester begins. Now what? Help...cries the teacher...."Disk This" is what we say---save time and energy. Teachers are getting more and more demands on them as they try to satisfy all their publics---state department, county office, school administration, peer teachers, parents, media, community, and students. Teachers need help with all the paperwork.

This session emphasizes using forms on disks to save time and energy---rather than always starting from scratch---to help new and continuing teachers with the paperwork. With the rising cost of paper and more often the accountability of making photocopies, place your work on disks and be more efficient.

At this session participants will receive a disk with useful forms for daily teaching duties in a variety of applications. Most new teachers and continuing teachers are FBLA advisers or share responsibility with the extracurricular activities. Competitive event forms, regional, state, and national registration forms, field trip form, State Leadership Conference Hotel Reservations form, and other club forms are on disk for your use. Also is a new formatting guide that will be used at the National Leadership Conference in 2001. Suggestions for fundraisers and documentation are included on the disk.

In cases where the teacher needs to go to a conference or be out due to sickness, he/she must prepare for a substitute teacher. It is useful to have a ready-made folder with vital information for the substitute to be efficient and effective. The information needed by a substitute usually includes lesson plans, seating chart, roll, evaluation form for sub, and evaluation form for teacher to evaluate sub, emergency information, and etc.

Spotlight cards are a useful tool to support self-esteem for students who demonstrate a significant increase in academics or performance. Communication logs help teachers to document phone calls, emails, spotlight cards, and verbal conversations with parents.

Listings of lesson plan sites to support the state curriculum are included. This includes lessons from a variety of courses. An update of teacher tips and tricks will help both new and continuing teachers daily.

Information and suggestions for creating web pages and valuable resources have become necessary for many teachers. Multimedia wave file, backgrounds, and other elements of web pages will be discussed. It is recommended that FBLA advisers create a web page for their club and attach it to their school web page and NC FBLA web page (www.ncfbla.org), if possible.

Since part the test item banks have been secured, new and continuing teachers are creating their own tests paralleling the state curriculum. In an effort to help teachers with this new endeavor, try the hot potatoes web site. Hot potatoes are free to educators who post their tests on the Internet for others to use. Hot potatoes include multiple-choice tests, matching; fill in the

blank, and short answer tests. Graphics can also be imported to customize the test relating to the topic.

An advanced feature of PowerPoint presentations is importing video in a presentation. With video editing software, such as Dazzle, students can edit and incorporate student-created videos into their PowerPoint presentations. Examples will be shown at the session.

Technology is constantly changing. This affects teachers because the curriculum is constantly changing. The best way to stay up-to-date is through networking with peer teachers and attending conferences for updated information. Actively participating in professional organizations is a valuable link for new and continuing teachers to exhibit their professionalism and to network with fellow teachers.

If your computer is slowing down, a couple of suggestions might include using Scandisk or deleting files from your hard drive. This will be discussed in further detail. Computer viruses are also becoming a constant threat to the classroom. Updating the computer virus software is critical and this will be discussed in further detail.

There will be an open-ended question-and-answer period at the end of the session to give participants opportunities to share their experiences and information as well as to receive clarification on any items discussed. The forms on disk can be customized and/or individualized to meet the needs of new and continuing teachers in different curriculums and settings. Classroom teachers present this session and share forms and ideas they use daily to help new and continuing teachers combat the stresses and demands of teaching. Paper flow is on the go and the best way to handle it is to "disk this!"

Production and Evaluation of On-Line Tutorials

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In 1999 the School received a grant form the United States Department of Agriculture, Higher Education Challenge Grants Program to produce an on-line delivery system for a professional course in Human Environmental Sciences. The major goals of this grant were to deliver a capstone course which: 1) addressed abstract professional issues such as ethics, 2) fostered good communication, 3) facilitated student collaboration and directed team work, 4) increased technology literacy of faculty and students, and 5) encouraged professional development. Early on in the process, it became clear that in order to meet our goals of good communication and professional development we needed to nurture improvement of writing skills. We needed to not only require good writing but to provide students with a workable means of improving their writing skills and producing good writing. In order to accomplish this goal, we developed a set of on-line tutorials, which provided reminders of basic grammar skills. In addition we adopted the APA manual of style and set up an additional tutorial to assist students in using this style.

Initially the grammar modules used animated PowerPoint Shows and text. However, after one semester of testing we found that students did not like the modules and given a choice did not use them. Therefore, in subsequent versions of the modules and in the APA Format tutorial we use a system, which provided the user with graphics and a minimal amount of text along with a streamed audio voice over. The process involved preparing PowerPoint slides with appropriate graphics and text. (Note: animation cannot be used with this method.) Then the slides were narrated in PowerPoint using CD quality. The product produced here is a Power Point Show or Presentation with linked .wav files. It is necessary to compress these files for streaming. We accomplished this by using Real Presenter. This software is produced by RealNetworks.com and can be installed directly into PowerPoint. The Power Point file is published to RealMedia inside of PowerPoint. A set of files is produced which can then be uploaded to a server. This method of delivery was better received and was presented at the Agenda for the Best Practice EXPO at East Carolina University in April of 2000. These tutorials are now being used outside of the context of the original course, and are available for all students in the School of Human

Environmental Sciences for assisting them in developing better writing skills. They are particularly helpful in Writing Intensive courses, which are a requirement of all students at ECU (12 s.h.).

It is our experience that students who make As or Bs in the required freshman English courses come to writing at the junior or senior level with rusty, unused skills. They find it particularly difficult to apply these skills to content areas in the sciences where critical analysis and understanding must be developed and communicated by writing. We wanted to set a high standard for our students but give them the tools to achieve these standards. Tutorials can do this. They can be used effectively in several ways. They can be mandatory or simply available. Sometimes we use them as a requirement to be able to rewrite an assignment.

Delivery of the tutorial is also an important consideration. The voice over system that we use requires Real Player (a free version can be downloaded from the ReadNetworks website). Many students need instructions on how to download. In addition, in order for presentations to download over a modem, we recommend that presentations be no longer than 5-7 minutes at the most. Sometimes this means breaking up topics into sub-topics. We have also made the tutorials available on CDs in some instances.

An important aspect of delivery of these tutorials, that we did not expect, was these RealMedia files produced in PowerPoint could not be downloaded and printed out by the students. Some students really want to be able to hold something in their hands. Therefore, it is wise to create a separate .pps file in PowerPoint and make it available for downloading for students who need to hold paper in their hand.

In the first semester when asked an open ended questions, half of the student named the new on-line delivery system as the one thing they liked most about the course. However, 14% named the on-line format as the thing they like least. Of that 14%, 100% had experienced technical difficulties with the on-line format. In response to these technical problems, we prepared an Online Student Guide.

BASIC SKILL NEEDED FOR ENTRY-LEVEL INTERNET JOBS

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Introduction

Whether a person is interested in working for an Internet company in marketing, sales, business development, design or even engineering, there are some basic core skills and knowledge necessary to be competitive, even for entry-level positions.

Basic Core Skills

The most basic and necessary skill is HTML. At some point, knowing HTML is going to be necessary. Whether you are in marketing or design and need to update your company's Web Site, or you are in sales and need to understand basic Web architecture, knowing HTML will be helpful.

Knowledge of Web graphics is equally important. One should know the basic rules of Web graphics: small file size, low resolution, and image optimization. Graphics tend to be large in file size and can easily slow down the loading of a Web page. It is important to understand how to decrease the size of images and why having too many images on a page is not ideal.

To understand the Internet industry and to show this to potential employers, it is important to know the "lingo" of the business. For example, what is ASP? It can have two meanings in the industry. 1. Applications Service Provider 2. Active Server Pages. Knowing the difference between these two terms is also important. Another example would be BANDWITH. It can be used technically to refer to the amount of space available for data to be transferred (i.e., cable lines offer more bandwidth than phone lines). It can also be used to refer to the number of people in a department or the number of people assigned to a project (i.e., a lead engineer may not have enough bandwidth (personnel) to complete a project by a given date).

More Marketable Skills

To be more competitive in the job market, entry-level employees may want to increase their knowledge and skills in the following areas:

Industry Knowledge – It is important to speak with knowledge and understanding of the industry. Know what current trends are evolving. Know what past business models have failed. Good sources of information on the industry are *Internet World* magazine, *Upside* magazine and *The Industry Standard* magazine.

Advanced Programming Languages – If engineering or development is a career goal, then knowing more advanced programming languages is a necessity. On the high end, knowledge of XML, JAVA, Cold Fusion and Active Server Pages is in demand. In fact, JAVA has now become the most sought after technical skill in the industry.

Additional Skills – Other skills are becoming very marketable in the Internet Industry. Two of the biggest are Project Management and Technical Writing.

Experience – The more experience a person can get in high school and college, the more marketable that person becomes in the industry. Most skills mentioned today can be self-taught via the medium itself, the Internet. Students should be encouraged to build their own Web Sites, learn some basic scripting languages such as JavaScript, plan their own class projects to manage and write technical documents for their Web projects (such as tutorials, help files, etc.)

Conclusion

The Internet Industry is constantly changing. What is marketable today may not be marketable in 2-4 years. Industry leaders predict that HTML will soon be passed over for more versatile languages, such as XML and DHTML. Currently, many high school students are graduating . with more Internet knowledge than some college students. What can get a person an entry-level job in the industry today, will not be true 4 years from now. It is important to learn the basic skills and gain the basic knowledge and increasingly build upon that knowledge.

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING

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As we begin the odyssey into the new millennium, we acknowledge the fact that technology will continue to dramatically change the landscape of education at all levels. Those educators who fail to integrate technology into their learning environments will deny their students the necessary skills to become life-long learners. This paper presents the theory of constructivist learning and how to integrate technology to support student-centered learning.

What is Constructivist Learning?

In the beginning, learning was "Socratic;" the teacher would engage a student (or perhaps two or three) in dialog to learn about a concept. Students would "construct" the meaning of the concept through their interaction and communication with the teacher as well as other students. As modern education enhanced access and the numbers of students exponentially increased, what we now call the "traditional" method of instruction became predominant. The singular teacher became the "sage on the stage" providing information and facts in a lecture format to many students. In effect, the dialog became a monologue in an effort to streamline mass education.

Educational reform sought to change this myopic method of instruction and reincarnate the acceptance and use of constructivist theory. Constructivism is founded in the "belief that knowledge, meaning, and understanding do not exist outside of meaningful, intentional activity" (Jonassen, et al., 1999, p. iii). More specifically, "constructivism suggests that learners are particularly likely to create new ideas when they are actively engaged in making external artifacts that they can reflect upon and share with others" (The Role of the Learner in Constructivist Theory, 1999, p. 1). Constructivism implies that effective learning does not occur when students read a chapter, listen to a lecture, take notes, and prove their knowledge in a testing situation. Real learning occurs when students investigate a concept, find information, discuss it, and create something with it. The integration of technology facilitates this investigation, discussion, and creation; it allows the teacher to be the "guide on the side."

As society moved from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, the technology was applied to teaching. Visual presentations moved from the chalkboard to transparency projectors, media moved from filmstrips to video, and eventually access to the Internet expanded libraries and enhanced communication worldwide. As critics warned that the technology would replace teachers, open-minded educators integrated technology as a tool to enhance learning. But as much as the computer may be used to support learning, it is still important to keep in mind that it is merely a learning medium. Computers may help students learn, but they do not make students learn. Meaning is actively constructed, not transmitted. This is achieved through the students' natural process of exploring their world, encountering things they do not understand, and attempting to make meaning by investigating.

How is Student-Centered Learning Promoted?

In practical application, student-centered, constructivist learning can be achieved in several ways. Alley (1996) suggests ten features that define student-centered learning:

1. Students discover knowledge rather than faculty simply transferring information to students.
2. Continuous student and course assessment, not just student achievement, are used as tools to analyze teaching.
3. Learning includes student-driven episodes, not just scheduled class lectures.
4. Student performance is observed by others versus only private assessment by the instructor.
5. Students help define the questions rather than instructors simply handing out facts.
6. Students take active and pro-active roles in learning versus just listening to lectures.
7. Student learners collaborate versus being rewarded for individual, competitive performance.
8. Educational productivity is judged in terms of student learning, not just faculty workload.
9. Faculty helps students discover and structure the problems and questions, then coach students on how to seek answers.
10. University support staff and service departments focus their efforts on the creation of all faculty-defined learning environments – beyond just the classroom.

More specifically, the examples provided below were taken from others' research in banking and finance (Mansfield & Echternacht, 1998), career development (Zeliff, 1998), and management and marketing (Davis & Walker, 1998).

In banking and finance classes, students could be challenged to ...
- Compare different banks' services and examine the role of the Federal Reserve System.
- Compile data relative to actual interest rates paid and exchanged by financial institutions.
- Convert dollars to other currencies such as the yen and pound using online converters.

When addressing career development concepts, students may search for ...
- Business sites with company information, job opportunities, annual reports, etc.
- Government and professional organizations/labor union sites, etc.
- Employment guides from non-profit and proprietary sources and college career centers.

Management and marketing concepts can be investigated by having students investigate ...
- Products and services (information and purchasing).
- Innovative marketing concepts and comparing advertising techniques.
- International sites to analyze products, advertising, and communication.

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CREATING A CLIENT-SERVER APPLICATION WITH FRONTPAGE 2000 AND ACCESS 2000

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This project will demonstrate how to create a Client-Server distributed model using tools provided with Microsoft Office 2000 Premium, with little or no programming knowledge. For this purpose we are using FrontPage 2000 to create the web interface GUI (our client-side) and Access 2000 for our database (server-side).

FrontPage 2000 is utilized to create our web forms by using the tools that are incorporated in the program. In order for the forms or web pages to communicate and send the information (records) to our database, we save them as Active Server Pages, also knows as ASP files. Microsoft's Active Server Pages (ASP) technology provides a framework for building dynamic HTML pages, which enable Internet and Intranet applications to be interactive. These ASP web pages will serve as our "client-side".

Microsoft Access 2000 is used as the database management system (DBMS). This database will reside on a server configured with FrontPage extensions and will be the "server-side" of the web application. As with any Access Database, further utilization of the program to create queries and reports may be used as needed. The advantage of using Access 2000 is the ability to upsize the database to a SQL server using a built-in wizard. This application is basically a transaction processing system where the client inputs the data directly into the database and the information is used in the back-end by the receiving department and they in turn can process the information to complete the transaction or generate reports and queries to analyze the data. As you will discover, there are endless uses for these applications.

This project does not cover security issues or any types of encryption methods--strongly recommended for sending information to a database that needs to be kept from prying eyes. You may, however, use the built-in User and Group permissions that come with Microsoft Access 2000 to further lock down the database, aside from normal server permissions that may already be in place.

The Database

If only a simple database is needed, FrontPage 2000 can easily create the database and the database connection. If a more complex database is planned, there will be necessary rules to follow when creating the tables of the database. If these rules are not followed, the web form will not be able to communicate with the database.

1. When assigning field names, don't use spaces. Use the underscore if necessary. Its highly recommended calling the form field in the FrontPage form the exact same name given in the field in the database table.

2. Do NOT assign a field type as number UNLESS there will be calculations performed with the values in this field. Avoid the use of NUMBER as part of the field name

because FrontPage makes assumptions and automatically assigns the field type as number. If the field in the table is a TEXT type, it will not be able to associate the fields. Instead use "No" or "ID" in fields names. If needed, change the captions in the form labels when creating a form in the database.

3. When creating tables for lookup values, don't use AUTONUMBER as a Primary key. Actually, for lookup tables assign the lookup value as the primary key. If a duplicate value is entered, an error message will be displayed.

4. If referential integrities are being set, ensure that they are thoroughly tested or else the form will not be able to send data to the database.

5. When creating the database and eventually the database may migrate to a SQL server, keep in mind that SQL does not handle cascade updates and deletes.

6. The Input Mask wizard may be utilized in the database. Be aware though, that the developer will have to ensure that the end-user enters the data properly on the web form by either setting validation rules on the FrontPage field properties, or give specific instructions next to the form field for correct data input.

7. If there is a required field is in the database table, make it a required field in the FrontPage form.

The FrontPage 2000 Form

Before creating the form, import the database into the FrontPage web to establish the database connectivity (ODBC). After creating the form, the developer will go into the form's properties and send the input to this database that is now located in a special folder in the FrontPage web.

After opening your website in FrontPage, click the File menu in FrontPage, and select the Import command. Browse for the database file and import it. FrontPage will then ask if a database connection is to be created for this file. Select Yes, and a unique name should be given to the database connection. Allow FrontPage to place the database file in a folder that is going to create called "fpdb". This is mainly for security reasons.

1. Once the database has been imported, it's recommended that a one-cell table without borders be inserted for easy placement of the form. This will facilitate the formatting of the form later.

2. Click the Forms button to insert a new form in the blank web page. Place the insertion point before the submit button and press the enter key a few times to give allow for some room. DO NOT delete these buttons, as they are part of the form.

3. Type the name of first input field. This can be descriptive and does not have to match the database field. Insert the form field. Double click the form field to go its property and for the field name type in the exact name that you have called the field in Access database.

4. Continue to add fields to the form. Remember to set validation rules if needed. For required fields, set the maximum of allowable characters. Only select number for

calculated fields and DO NOT name fields with the word "NUMBER" unless number type fields are being utilized.

5. Save the form page as an Active Server Page (asp).

6. After saving, right-click inside the form and select Form Properties. Select the Send to Database option and then click on the Advanced button. If the name of the database connection is not already selected, click the down arrow to select the name of the database connection. If needed, you will also have to select the name of the table that has the fields that you would like the data sent to.

7. Click the "Verify Connection" button to ensure that the asp file is able to connect to the database. Once it has informed you that it has updated the database, click the form fields tab and verify that each of the fields in the form is matched with its associated field in the table. If it can't make an automatic association, FrontPage will be quick to create a new field in the table, which will later have to be deleted. This problem can be avoided from the onset by giving the database and form fields the same name. It will also add additional fields for time, user identification, etc, but just ignore these added fields.

8. Once the field names have been verified, click on OK. Maximize FrontPage if needed and format the form to enhance it and resave.

9. Test the input form in the web browser. After clicking on the send button, a confirmation page with the saved fields will display. If an error message is displayed such as, "can't make ODBC connection", double check all of the forms field properties and ensure that they match the fields in the table. Look for field type matches as well. If needed, double check form properties and verify the database connections and the field properties. You may also want to verify your database connection by going to Tools, Web Settings, click the Database Tab, and make sure your database connection name has a green checkmark next to it. Once the error is located and corrected, save any changes and test the input form on the web again.

10. Once the form is working correctly, open the database located in the fpdb folder and see if the information was sent to it. There should be a record added to the table if all worked well.

Creating the Search Form

This search form will allow the user to search the database. Create a New Blank web page in the FrontPage web and follow the next steps:

1. Click the Insert menu, point to Database, and click on Results.

2. Select "Use an Existing Database Connection". If needed, select from the drop down list the name of the Database connection that was used for the input form and click on Next.

3. Select the name of the table that is going to be queried and click on Next.

4. Click the Edit list button if needed to select the fields that are wanted for display in the results of the search.

5. Click the More Options button, and then click on the Criteria button. Here is where the fields will be selected that will be make up the form search fields.

6. Click the Add button and select the first field name that will be used for the search criteria. At this point, select equal to EQUAL TO and then select whether to choose AND or OR criteria or the search.

7. Click the Ordering button if the results are to be in ascending or descending order by a given field. Click on OK and then click the Next button to continue the Results Wizard.

8. Decide how to format the results of the search is selected in this next step. Unfortunately there is no way to change these options once the Wizard is complete. Experimenting with the different options may give you a better sense of each.

9. Click on Next and then choose the maximum allowable records in the results.

10. Click on Next. This step of the wizard will allow the selection of number of records displayed at one time. Make sure that the Insert Search Form checkbox is selected and click on Finish.

11. Save the file as an ASP file as well. Test the search form and make sure to search for a record that is in currently residing in the database. Enhance the appearance of the form by formatting the information between the "Database Results Region". Don't delete these yellow bars or you will have to start over.

GOING THE DISTANCE

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The presentation and paper are designed to address integrating technology into the classroom using computer-mediated communication. Too often educators seek the information super highway to find the path to transformation, but what they overlook is "going the distance." Too often faculty seeks to use the latest, high-tech multimedia. What 'going the distance" entails is technology to enhance communication between students and faculty, students and students, and all participants in the learning process. This connection between people via technology is what some experts call computer mediated communication (CMC).

Typically, traditional education in the past has consisted of authoritative faculty lectures and very little interaction between learner and instructor. Although in today's classroom the teacher's role from expert and authority is transforming to a role of facilitating student responsibility for learning. With the emergence of these changing roles between both instructor and learner, it is becoming imperative for faculty to implement new initiatives into the classroom that will facilitate placing student learning first. By integrating these initiatives along with the use of CMC, educators expand their capability to meet learner needs. Five areas were determined to have a major effect on the ability to provide effective technology in the classroom. For this reason it has become imperative for educators to integrate a variety of delivery methods into the classroom to meet the diverse needs of every student. These areas include:

E-mail

Website Development

Listserv/discussion groups

Chatrooms

Blackboard/WebCT

Transformation is never easy, but faculty in higher education currently has the opportunity to redefine the teaching profession to a learning profession with use of the technologies presented in this presentation/paper. As mentioned previously, effectively utilizing computer-mediated communication can lead us to learning transformations in higher education.

INCORPORATING SERVICE LEARNING IN THE BUSINESS CLASSROOM

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We remember . . .
10% of what we hear
15% of what we see
20% of what we hear and see
60% of what we do
80% of what we do with active reflection
90% of what we teach
(Phillips, 1984)

Today, schools are faced with decreasing levels of funding and increasing demands from stakeholders. Because of the diversity of students in classrooms, diversity in course content and presentation style is essential. Alternative pedagogies must be put to use. "Service-learning pedagogies are used by teachers in colleges and universities as well as in K-12 schools to enhance traditional modes of learning, actively engage students in their own education through experiential learning in course-relevant contexts, and foster lifelong connections between students, their communities, and the world outside the classroom." (Crews, 1995, p.1). Well-planned service learning projects can take advantage of hearing, seeing, doing, and reflection activities.

The incorporation of service learning in business classrooms reflects the increasing importance of community service in business (Tucker et. al, 1998). Companies such as Hewlett Packard, Ben &Jerry's, The Body Shop, Levi Straus, Helene Curtis, Pillsbury Co., and General Electric have incorporated community service in their corporate strategy and culture (Tucker et. al, 1998). Service learning is distinguished from volunteerism in that projects/activities are tied to course objectives and used as a medium for students to learn and demonstrate their knowledge thus supplementing papers and exams and allowing for different ways of knowing and learning (McCarthy et. al, 1999).

The Business Teacher Education Curriculum Guide and Program Standards developed by the National Association for Business Teacher Education (NABTE) refers to service learning in Standards 3-Instruction, 4-Assessment, 5-Management, 6-Student Organizations, and 8-Publics. Service learning is mentioned in many of the business education course descriptions in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) blueprints-- "Work-based learning strategies appropriate for this course are service learning...".

The projects and/or activities allow students to reflect, and to gain a deeper understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The projects bring students face-to-face with real decision-makers and individuals whose lives will be impacted. Interaction of this type helps them to understand the important nature of their project work.

Students' technical skills are enhanced, problem-solving skills improved, academic achievement levels increased, and time management and leadership skills developed through service learning projects (Godfrey, 1999, December). Nonprofit agencies, businesses, government agencies, and schools are usual recipients of service projects. Student benefits of the projects are: 1) enriched skill base, 2) improved learning through reinforcement of classroom content, 3) development of new contacts and experiences beyond school because of different types of stakeholders, 4) better understanding of social needs of the community and the impact the student makes, 5) competitive advantage in employment interviews because of community service, and 5) an opportunity to participate in the school's outreach mission (Tucker et. al, 1998).

Service learning projects that have been used in business classes include:

- Entrepreneurship/strategy class -- students developed business plans for projects to benefit low-income communities
- College management classes partnered with Junior Achievement (JA) and the local school district to offer one-hour economics modules to K-12 students.
- Computer information systems class designed systems for tracking clients and volunteers for nonprofit agency.
- Accounting students documented and analyzed set of operational procedures (purchasing, accounts payable, payroll, etc.) for participating organizations.
- Advanced keyboarding students taught residents of public housing how to keyboard.
- Business policy students applied general management skills to challenges local food banks faced in systematizing its policies for food collection and distribution.
- Computer applications class designed book covers for library books and web pages for teachers and departments within school.
- Managerial communication students practice communication skills by interacting with and presenting reports to nonprofit agency.

The service learning projects students participate in provide excellent case studies for current class, allow for more engaging cases for discussion in future classes, allow for improved internal links and support for campus organizations, and provide stronger links with the off-campus community. Students are required to articulate the connections between classroom studies and field experiences through journals, sharing sessions, final reflection essays, and meetings with faculty. Other forms of evaluation include peer evaluations, oral interviews, input from agencies, presentations to community leaders, and videotaped presentations.

Service learning projects should be designed and implemented cautiously. Faculty should be clear about expectations of community partner representative(s). In some cases, there are risks and liability associated with the projects. Examples include students working off campus, students traveling to or interacting with clients in unsecured environments, professional liabilities of malpractice and/or negligence (accounting students preparing tax returns); bad students (lack of commitment, integrity, and fundamental skills), and/or bad projects (meaningless work--making copies or exceed student's level of expertise). Faculty should consult with the university/school/agency attorney or risk manager and review all procedures and coverage.

Service learning projects are unique and can be adjusted to fit the needs of each classroom. They allow students to apply skills in new domains. The projects mentioned in this paper required approximately 15 hours of service outside of the classroom.

"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happened to him."

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DISTANCE LEARNING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: A PERSPECTIVE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE DESKTOP

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As higher education moves into the new millennium, more educators and their students agree that teaching and studying at a distance is an effective educational strategy. During the 1990's, a transition occurred from the existing dichotomy of campus-based face-to-face instruction to distributed learning environments and teaching models for the new millennium. Technology evolved into an essential component of the educational delivery system and distance education is now considered one of the most adequate and attractive means of education in the 21st Century.

While it may be true that technology does not improve learning, it does not denigrate it either. Students for whom convenience may be a crucial factor in receiving college credit are earning degrees by satellite, audio, or online. Distance education is also effectively being used for rural and inner city classes, enrichment, staff development, and in-service training for teachers and administrators. Evaluation studies, with a degree of replication, indicate a significant difference does not exist in learning outcomes between distance learning and traditional instruction methods.

Distance learners gain more than their traditional counterparts because of required commitment, maturity and motivation, while broadening their network of colleagues, skills in working with others, and collaborating across distances, and other social skills. Instructors are charged to carefully plan unique and varied activities and to use current communication methods to reduce the instructional barriers posed by distance education.

While the ability of the teacher and students to see each other may not be a necessary condition for effective distance learning, the need for interactive classes is crucial. Technology--old, new, and emerging--allows interactivity and collaboration between teachers and their students accomplished via streaming real-time video and audio, discussion threads, email, video or graphics interactivity, and other applications.

Academia is facing an unprecedented range of external pressures to offer courses via distance education because of changing student demographics, fiscal constraints, emerging informational and instructional technologies, new skill demands from private sector employers, and new conceptions of teaching and learning. Some educators see distance education as an unconventional strategy and a threat to the sacred institution of higher education and professional identity.

Mission, vision, and strategic plans for distance education all seem to encourage dismantling of an "instructor centered" paradigm in favor of a "student centered" one. The result of distance education is distance learning, a flexible form of education that allows the learner to determine when and where to learn. Providers of distance learning programs congregate around the common theme that distance education is *the* learning strategy for the new millennium.

Web Site Design Considerations

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Introduction

Web site design is a form of paperless publishing where the destination is the computer screen rather than the printed page. Good design principles are essential to creating memorable pages that convey the intended message and, at the same time, keep the viewer coming back. Elements of space, treatment of images, color of background, typography choices, and logical navigation are just a few of the many factors of design that influence the way a web site is perceived.

Questions to Answer Prior to Design

It is imperative to have a description of the "typical viewer" in mind before beginning the design process. The site should be designed from the viewpoint of the visitors seeking information from it. Keep in mind that what you consider good design may not be what is best for the target audience. Before touching a keyboard, the following list of questions should be answered:

- Who am I trying to reach?
- What is the purpose of my site?
- What is my theme?
- What impressions am I creating?
- Is the site personal or professional?
- What kinds of browsers are most often used by these people?
- What are my resources?
- What links do I need?
- What possible web sites can I use as models?
- Have I gotten permission to link to other sites? To use logos and/or graphics?
- How can I maintain site freshness?
- How can my site grow?

Elements of Space

Structural Elements of Web Pages

Web sites have basic structural elements much like those of printed media. These elements provide good organization and consistency from page to page within the site. It is especially important for the title page, or home page, to have all of the essential elements visible in the "unscrolled" web page. The goal is to design the pages so that they are organized intuitively from the perspective of the target audience. This means that the viewer will know what to expect from each page based on the design standards. Each page should contain at least three sections: the header, the body, and the footer.

The Header

The header is the first thing a visitor sees when the page loads. It should immediately inform the viewer about the site. Often a site title or logo is placed in the header to grab the attention of the viewer along with a navigation system. Placing navigation in the header allows the viewer to see the contents and make a decision about whether or not to wait for the whole page to load. The header should load quickly.

The Body

The body contains the main content of the page; therefore, it is the most important section. Content is what provides value to the viewers and keeps them coming back. Good design principles are especially important to the body because viewers will be attracted to sites that match their "mental mapping" systems.

The Footer

The footer is useful in maintaining continuity between pages. It is located at the bottom of

every page and contains such elements as copyright notices, contact email addresses, disclaimers, last revision date, hit counters, or repeated navigation. While it is not necessary to repeat all footer items on every page, it is useful to have some items standardized to maintain consistency and help viewers "keep their bearings" while in the site.

Organization and Style

A web site with good content will be unsuccessful if the information is disorganized. Organization of content should form a logical, mental map for the viewer to follow. Experienced web designers begin by sketching out on paper how the site will look. The result is a flow chart of how the pages will be connected. Each page on the flow chart is then diagramed to determine the most effective layout for the information. General web design guidelines include:

- Put the most important information near the top of the document.
- Write clear concise text.
- Use graphics only if they are justified.
- Plan for "quick scanning" by viewers.
- Limit the amount of information on each page.
- Include easy to follow navigation.
- Avoid "annoying" elements.
- Plan for interactivity.
- Include a feedback method.

The Layout Grid

The first step in developing page diagrams is to establish a layout grid that can be used throughout the site. The layout grid divides the pages into rectangular sections in which headings, images, and text will be placed. It is important to arrange the elements on the page in a consistent manner. As much as possible, maintain the layout grid on all pages. Discovering the best layout grid for both simple and intricate pages takes practice and experimentation.

White Space

The use of white space is often overlooked as a method of balancing web page content and attracting the attention of the viewers to items of importance. Keep in mind that it is not

necessary to fill every square inch of screen space with text or objects. White space, or blank space, is very useful to create divisions, group information, or add simplicity to a site. White space also complements other divisional tools such as horizontal and vertical lines. It should be an integral part of web page design that establishes margins, paragraph breaks, and other "blank areas" that help viewers focus on the content.

Frames

One of the most controversial issues of web site design is the use of frames. Like any other element of design, it must first be determined if using frames will enhance the web presentation. Frames are very useful for displaying a common menu system at all times and for guiding the visitors in a specific direction. The down side is that poorly designed sites using frames can appear to be disjointed and can be confusing to viewers.

Treatment of Images

Graphics serve to set the scene for the theme of the web site. While graphics are very popular with designers and viewers, it is often difficult to select the right graphics that complement and add balance to the content. Load time is a major graphics consideration. Almost everyone enjoys pictures, but very few people have patience with long download times. The two common graphic formats used on the web are .GIF and .JPEG. Each has advantages and disadvantages in terms of load time and image quality.

Color of Background

Color is used to convey meaning. The color scheme used in a web site has a major impact on how the viewers perceive the message. When selecting colors for a web site, choose the background color first. The background color occupies more space and dictates other color choices. An appropriate background color is essential to creating a theme and establishing a mood for the site. It provides a backdrop for other color choices such as fonts, graphics, and divisional lines. High contrast between the background color and the text makes the site easier to read. Color provides a memorable way to emphasize major points in the content such as dates, events, and titles.

Typography Choices

Effective use of typography can either direct the viewers' attention or divert it. The choice of font style, type, size, and color establishes the "norm" for the pages within the site in terms of topic importance and levels. Titles and headers should be short, concise, and about one font size larger than the main body. The choice of font colors and types should have some connection to the theme or message the site is trying to convey if possible. If not, it is important to make sure they do not compete with the background or other colors chosen. While font size and color might vary within a page, the variety of font types should be minimized. Too many fonts on the same page make it difficult for the viewer to organize the material logically.

Logical Navigation

A good navigation system is the backbone of a successful web site. The structure of the web site itself provides direction for logical navigation. Dividing the material into clear topics and subtopics based on a logical order such as time, importance, size, or processing steps creates a "natural" navigation system that makes sense to the viewers. Every page of a web site should have some type of consistent, meaningful navigation that always works. Having predictable navigation makes the site more comfortable and valuable to the user and helps the user develop trust in the content of the site. Most viewers have very limited time. They develop preferences for particular sites because they know they will find what they need quickly and will make return visits.

Conclusion

Successful web site development requires a skillful integration of content and design. For the web publisher, this means taking a careful look at design choices and making selections that are compatible with the target audience based on the information at hand. It requires time and practice to develop and test sites until the right mix is found, but the extra investment pays off if the site accomplishes its intended purpose and goals.

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INTRODUCTION TO MICROSOFT ACCESS 2000

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Introduction

Access is the database component of the Microsoft Office 2000 Suite. A database is used to organize, store, maintain, retrieve, sort, and report information that is a valuable resource to any business or organization. Although Access is very powerful and can perform a wide variety of database functions, it has many small-scale applications that only require basic Access skills. Becoming familiar with database terminology, following the guidelines for database design, creating simple data tables, and retrieving and reporting information are four simple steps to mastering basic Access and opening the door to effectively managing the information that is so vital to today's business community.

Step 1 - Becoming Familiar with Database Terminology

While there is an extensive list of terminology associated with database management, only a few of these terms are essential to the beginner. A list of essential terminology is provided below:

Field - A field is a single characteristic or attribute of a person, place, object, event or idea (a column).
Field Value - The specific value, or content, of a field.
Primary Key - A field, or a collection of fields, whose values uniquely identify each record (unique identifier).
Common Field - A field that appears in both tables. The common field is used to connect tables.
Record - A set of field values that describe a person, place, object, event, or idea (a row).
Table - A collection or records.
Database - A collection of related tables. Access is a relational database.

Step 2 - Following the Guidelines for Designing Databases

A database is only useful if it is designed to meet the specific needs of its users. Good database design requires careful planning to determine the fields, tables, and relationships needed to satisfy the data input and output requirements. The following guidelines help to

insure that the database will be able to produce the needed results:

Identify all of the fields needed to produce the required information. Consider the type of information to be stored in the database and the type of reports that must be generated from the data. Plan fields that will produce this information.

Group related fields into tables. Look for logical grouping of field information. For example, all information pertaining to students might be placed in one table. All information pertaining to counselors might be placed in a second table.

Determine each table's primary key field. Look for a field that uniquely identifies each record. Such fields include social security numbers, identification codes, part numbers, or product serial numbers. It might be necessary to assign a unique number to each record or to allow Access to assign one automatically.

Include a common field in related tables. The common field is used to connect one table logically with another table. For example, each student record might include a counselor code that matches the counselor code listed for each counselor in the counselor table.

Avoid redundancy. Data redundancy occurs when the data is stored in more than one place in the database. With the exception of the common field(s) to connect tables, redundancy wastes storage space and can increase the likelihood that data will be entered inconsistently.

Determine the properties of each field. Field properties include field name, field type, maximum number of characters, field description, and validity checks. Properties assigned to the fields determine the types of information that can be retrieved from the database.

Step 3 - Creating Simple Data Tables

Creating a table consists of naming fields, assigning field data types and defining properties for the fields, specifying a primary key, and maintaining records.

Naming Fields

It is best to choose a field name that describes the purpose of the field so that it is easy to remember. In addition, the following rules apply to naming fields:

- A name can be up to 64 characters long.
- A name can contain letters, numbers, spaces, and special characters except for a period,

exclamation mark, accent mark, and square brackets

- A name cannot begin with a space.
- A name must be unique within a table, but it can be used again in another table.

Experienced users of databases capitalize the first letter of each word in a field name, avoid using long field names, use standard abbreviations, and avoid using spaces in field names.

Assigning Field Data Types and Defining Properties

The data type determines the field values that can be entered in the field. Access provides the following data types:

Text - Allows field values containing letters, digits, spaces and special characters. Field size: 0 - 255 characters.

Memo - Allows field values containing letters, digits, spaces and special characters that make up long comments. Field size: 1-64,000 characters.

Number - Allows positive and negative numbers as field values. Field size: 1-15 digits.

Date/Time - Allows field values containing dates and times to December 31, 9999. Field size: 8 bytes.

Currency - Allows field values similar to number data type using the currency format. Field size: 15 digits on the left side of decimal and 4 digits on the right side.

AutoNumber - Integers controlled by Access. Access automatically inserts a value field and numbers records as they are entered. Field size: 9 digits.

Yes/No - Limits values to yes and no, on and off, or true and false. Field size: 1 character.

Hyperlink - Consists of a hyperlink address. Field size: 1 gigabyte maximum.

Lookup Wizard - Creates a field that lets you look up a field value in another table or in a predefined list of values. Field size: Same as the primary key field used to perform the lookup.

Each data type allows for a set of properties that help to insure that the data is entered accurately. Such properties include making fields required, selecting default values, entering captions, and specifying data validation rules and text.

Specifying a Primary Key

A primary key uniquely identifies each record in the table. Access does not allow for duplicate values in the primary key field. Once a primary key field is selected, every record must have a value in the primary key field. Access stores the records on the disk in the order they are entered but displays them in order by the field values of the primary key. In addition, Access responds faster to requests for specific records based on the primary key.

Adding Records

Records are added to tables by using the table datasheet or by creating a form. A table datasheet provides a simple way to add records. A table datasheet displays records in rows and columns. Each row is a separate record in the table, and each field is a separate column. When a table contains many fields, it is useful to create a form to maintain the records. While forms can be customized, Access provides a wizard that automatically creates a form for data entry.

Step 4 - Retrieving and Reporting Information

The process of retrieving information from a database is known as querying. Access provides powerful query capabilities that allow the user to display selected fields and records from a table, sort records, perform calculations, find and display information from two or more tables, and generate professionally designed reports. Query and report wizards are available in Access to make information retrieval and reporting easy for the beginner. More experienced database users can fully customize the querying and reporting process.

Conclusion

Access is designed to provide data management tools for all types of users--beginning through advanced. It is designed to use as a stand-alone data manager or to integrate with the other components of the Microsoft Office 2000 Suite (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) to provide

source data for mail merges, spreadsheet data for advanced calculations, or supplements to PowerPoint slides.

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DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR TEACHING

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Is there a difference between leadership and management? What makes teachers effective leaders? What are some of the qualities that teachers need in order to be effective leaders? Most individuals agree that there is a continuum between leadership and management. Management could be stated as "doing things right," and leadership as "doing the right thing." Leaders and teachers leave an unforgettable mark on the principles that are passed down from one generation to the next. Leaders and teachers encourage individuals and groups and help them toward fulfillment of their goals. Leaders and teachers provide employees and students with opportunities to learn and develop.

Leadership immures such variables as managing, planning, motivating, envisioning goals, recruiting, training, controlling, organizing, and evaluating. Effective teachers in the classroom have these variables and many more. Effective leaders and teachers possess many of the same traits, such as judgment, initiative, dependability, confidence, intelligence, objectivity, honesty, cooperation, understanding, and confidence. Other qualities that teachers need to be effective leaders in the classroom are but not limited to the following:

Decision Makers. A leader can make decisions without having to involve others. There are many instances in the course of the day that require teachers to practice decision?making skills. Building principals usually expect teachers to handle routine kinds of problems without coming to them each time for input. Principals expect teachers to make decisions.

Enthusiasm. If teachers aren't enthusiastic in the classroom, they probably don't have any students signing up for their classes. Students do not like to sit and be bored for an entire class period. If teachers have leadership qualities, they will be also possessing energetic qualities that transfer to their students.

Inspire. One of the greatest rewards in teaching is to have former student returns and tell teachers how much they inspired and influenced their life. Teachers usually are not aware of this when it is happening and seems to take a while for students to understand the value many teachers have added to their life. Effective teachers inspire students just as good leaders inspire employees.

Positive Feedback. The responsibility of all teachers is to insure the success of all students. One of the first ways this can happen is through positive feedback on their performance. Focus on what things they are done correctly and challenge them to improve on those things that need further work. Too often teachers focus on just the things that are wrong. Teachers should find a way to provide negative feedback in a positive way.

Good Listeners. Good teachers and good listeners must learn to practice good listening skills. As educated as they are, there is always something that can be learned. Many times students will say that certain teachers don't listen to them. This important component of the communication cycle can bring about an understanding that leads to learning. Listening is a skill that has to be learned, and one that is important to be taught.

Fairness. Each semester student teachers hear from their methods teachers that they must be friendly, firm, and fair. As an instructional leader, these are good pieces of advice. The images that students

form are based on how teachers or leaders behave in everyday activities. Students tend to lose respect for those who favor particular individuals. If there are policies, procedures, and rules, they must apply to everyone.

Confidence. Everyone knows that the classroom teachers, as well as others in leadership roles, receive information that others would like to keep in confidence. It is usual to receive this information frequently when others also consider teachers as a friend, a mentor, a counselor, a parent figure, etc. It is a powerful thing to be respected in this manner.

Creativity. In many cases, teachers and leaders don't have high enough expectations for those they are teaching or leading. The easy way out is not the best way to learn and grow as students and professionals. Sure, students will complain about difficult assignments, but teachers should remember the pride they have seen displayed when a major project or assignment has been completed successfully. If teachers encourage students to be creative, students will believe they are successful in their accomplishments.

Establish Clear Rules. What is the reason for students needing to learn? There are outcomes that any teachers or leaders know are the expected ending result. By establishing appropriate objectives, students can be guided toward these outcomes. Too often these outcomes are not shared and students are given enough direction on how to reach them.

Humor. There's nothing better than students finding out that teachers are human being just like they are. This lesson is one that is learned when a mistake is made. Teachers and leaders need to ease up and have some fun. We have all heard the adage that laughter is the best medicine. There should be a prescription for several doses a day.

Dependability. Individuals would not remain in leadership roles long if they lacked this characteristic. This would need to exist without exception. Many teachers have worked with someone who was appointed or voted into an office and then failed to live up to the responsibilities required. The work was usually completed because there were excellent followers who came through in the end for the "leader." Effective classroom teachers must be dependable.

Diversity. A key word in society today is diversity. Teachers and leaders must deal with diversity in the classroom and in the work environment. Teachers need to incorporate diversity education in the curriculum, and leaders must establish training programs that deal with diversity in the workforce.

Leadership is directly related to the success of an organization, and effective teaching certainly plays a role in the life of students. Many of these students are the future leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, a majority of teachers, regardless of the subject or subjects they teach, are certainly effective leaders and shape the lives of their students.

What NC Teachers Already Know about E-Commerce

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OBJECTIVE

This discussion will focus on the resources being used by NC e-commerce teachers at the secondary level, specific competencies required by the NC State Department of Public Instruction, and how teachers are addressing these competencies.

INTRODUCTION

Many traditional bricks-and-mortar businesses are beginning to offer some of their products via e-commerce—the selling of goods and services by electronic means over the Internet (Wells, Burnett & Moriarty, 2000, pp. 462-463). It is expected that by the end of the year 2001, online retail revenues will reach $17 billion and business-to-business (B2B) revenues will reach $183 billion (Wells, Burnett & Moriarty, 2000, pp. 462-463). The large amount of business transacted online is important to retail companies. Most of the data for this presentation was gained from impromptu focus groups and telephone interviews.

THE THEORY

As is the case with most businesses, e-commerce does not exist within a vacuum. It affects—and is affected by—the bricks-and-mortar component of a business. While e-commerce is at the point where a business can be conducted from home, most surveys indicate that consumers prefer a bricks-and-mortar component to the businesses that they frequent. More importantly, retired persons, who have more disposable income than other generations, are increasingly reluctant to conduct online retail business with a store without a retail component. NC teachers are aware of this fact—and they are disseminating this information to students.

The course outline developed in cooperation with the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction emphasizes that students should plan their e-commerce sites. Often, students storyboard the home page—as well as other pages that link back to the home page--in order to reinforce this planning. The rationale behind storyboarding is that the web site should "fit" the business. The most popular way that most NC teachers are teaching planning and storyboarding is by allowing their students to surf the Internet in the classroom. For example, teachers may allow their students to identify 2 or 3 reputable professional e-commerce sites in order to analyze color contrast, text layout and page design. These students then construct a storyboard similar to the professional e-commerce sites analyzed. From this exercise, it soon becomes apparent that most professional businesses (Wal-Mart, Overton's) have a different appearance from sites catering to the teenage market.

It has also been found that the web component of a bricks-and-mortar business should reflect the culture and values of that business. Simply, e-commerce sites for Fortune 500 companies are not normally "busy." Thus, banners aren't as successful as they once were—especially for successful e-businesses. The problem with flashy banners is that the sites may attract web surfers—but they don't hold the paying customer. *Note: A site's ability to attract and hold a customer is called "stickiness."* Businesses today want sites that make a consumer want to revisit—due to good old-fashioned service. Again, NC teachers are successfully communicating this information to students.

For any beginning e-commerce site, most teachers agree that HTML should be the programming language foundation. The reason for the strong emphasis on HTML is not that other HTML editors don't work. In fact, most HTML editors (Frontpage ®, Homesite ®, Dreamweaver ® and others) are designed to operate in a point-and-click manner. Thus, these editors work *too well*. However, they don't develop the student's *logic* skills necessary to maintain a site when bugs occur. Many NC teachers are using a dual approach—beginning the course with HTML and then allowing HTML editors to be used later in the course.

Good NC teachers are teaching students that the following *customer eliminators* (design flaws that drive customers away) should be avoided:

1. *Long download times*. Flash animation effects and video streaming are fine if the customer's computer can handle the extra bandwidth. However, most research says that an e-business has 5-15 seconds get their customer to a purchase decision. If the consumer waits longer than 15 seconds, they go to a competitor—and they don't return (Compumaster, 1999).

2. *Age-inappropriate moving or blinking text*. For e-commerce sites targeting small children or teenagers, blinking text works well. However, retired persons usually surf the Internet at public libraries. The slow download times frustrate this important "retired consumer" market—and they leave to simpler, more professional sites (Compumaster, 1999).

3. *The multimedia does not fit the content of the web page*. When consumer use of the Internet was expanding, any animation was impressive. Today, consumers know that inappropriate or irrelevant animation is a sign that an e-business is run by novices.

4. *The consumer's older browser or software doesn't support your content*. As stated earlier, retired persons usually access the Internet at public libraries. Thus, if retired persons are your target market, you probably shouldn't use Shockwave ®.

5. *Not designing your web site for access by the differently-abled.* The National Federation of the Blind and other groups are lobbying for laws that require e-business web

pages to be blind-accessible. A few amendments to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) are before the U.S. Congress as this article is written. At the minimum, businesses should use an <ALT> tag that allows surfers to turn off a graphical image. Nobody knows the full extent that amendments to the ADA may change e-commerce.

CONCLUSION

The field of e-commerce is evolving. As usual, the technology component of any industry becomes easier to master—given economies of scale and the influence of free enterprise upon manufacturers and programmers. However, human nature evolves slowly. North Carolina teachers are aware of the human element in e-commerce.

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